

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

The Office Action objected to claim 1 because “longitudinal access” should have been “longitudinal axis.” By this amendment, applicant has amended claim 1 to overcome this informality. The Office Action also objected to claim 5 as in improper form because a multiple dependent claim cannot depend from another multiple dependent claim. By this amendment the feature of dependent claim 5 has been incorporated into independent claim 1 and original dependent claim 5 has been cancelled. Thus, this informality has also been overcome.

The Office Action rejected claims 1, 6 and 10 as anticipated by GB 1380395 (Halls); rejected claims 1-2 and 6-7 as anticipated by the Derwent Abstract of EP 0,940,524 A2 (Bogle); rejected claims 3 and 8 as obvious over Bogley; and rejected claims 4 and 9 as obvious over Halls.

Applicant respectfully submits that the amended claims distinguish over the prior art. As amended independent claims 1 and 6 now include the feature of the pre-formed longitudinal line of weakness and the feature that the strip is flat on opposite sides of the line in its as-formed condition.

A gap between floor boards can vary in width along its length from zero to 8mm or more. Accordingly, it is important that the strip of the present invention is able to fill as wide range of gaps as possible. The strip of the present invention is able to fill very narrow gaps by making the strip flat on opposite sides of the line of weakness, thereby allowing the opposite sides to be brought completely together into face-to-face registration, so that the strip can fill a gap as narrow as double the thickness of the strip or a gap as wide as the width of the strip when flat.

The strip of Hall is not flat and comprises sealing ribs which substantially increase the minimum thickness of the folded strip and prevent it from filling narrow gaps of the kind that exist between floor boards.

Bogle again does not disclose or suggest a flat strip. The strip of Bogle is intended to recover its shape into grooves rather than abutting the side edges of the panel members are required in Claims 1 and 5.

Neither Hall nor Bogle disclose a strip having a pre-formed line of weakness as such: both fold arbitrarily when bent and this can cause an imperfect seal if the fold is not central.

None of the other cited documents disclose or suggest a strip having a pre-formed longitudinal line of weakness, which is flat on opposite sides of the line in its as-formed condition. Accordingly, applicant respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Respectfully submitted,

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